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SUBJECT: EPA ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR MEETS WITH THAI  
COUNTERPART

REF: 2004 BANGKOK 395

1. (U) On February 10, 2006, Judith E. Ayres, Assistant Administrator for International Affairs, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), met with the Royal Thai Government's (RTG) Minister of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), Mr. Yongyut Tiypairat. Ms. Ayres was accompanied by Ambassador Boyce. Minister Yongyut was accompanied by several senior staff members, including Dr. Supat Wangwongwatana, Deputy Director General of MONRE's Pollution Control Department, with whom EPA coordinates several ongoing environmental projects.

2. (U) Ms. Ayres brought greetings from EPA Administrator Johnson and congratulated MONRE on seven successful years of collaboration under the memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation between MONRE and EPA (reftel), including programs on clean air, clean water, enforcement and compliance, dispute resolution and technology transfer. When asked about tsunami recovery, Minister Yongyut expressed interest in further collaboration in the area of near coastal waters. When asked about what other kind of collaborations he sees in the future of the MOU, he had no specific list to share, but in general he places great value on the technology, equipment and technical expertise that EPA has to offer. Ms. Ayres also confirmed EPA's interest in assisting the RTG in the phase out of TBT (tributyltin) compounds in marine anti-fouling applications, and in further strengthening the Mekong River Commission, which Minister Yongyut currently chairs. Ms. Ayres also communicated concerns on the environmental protection measures being taken at the Nam Theun II Dam in Lao P.D.R.

3. (U) Dr. Supat mentioned his plans to hold a ministerial on environmental health in Bangkok in December 2006. Representatives from ASEAN plus Japan, China, Korea and Mongolia will be invited. Ms. Ayres noted EPA's successful experiences with such conferences and offered to share information on the subject if requested by RTG.

4. (U) Following the meeting with Minister Yongyut, Ms. Ayres met with the director of USAID's Regional Development Mission/Asia and the director of its environmental program. Ms. Ayres noted EPA's strong interest in continuing the successful environmental cooperation with RTG and the value that EPA brings to USAID's environmental programs in Thailand and the region. Ms. Ayres also relayed the message from Ambassador Boyce that the embassy encourages a strong USAID-EPA working relationship under the ECO-Asia program. Increased EPA involvement in ECO-Asia would benefit environmental protection efforts not only in Thailand, but throughout South and Southeast Asia. The director agreed that EPA assistance in Thailand and the region with USAID support has been beneficial and looked forward to continued USAID-EPA cooperation under ECO-Asia.

5. (U) This cable was cleared by Ms. Ayres.  
BOYCE